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The
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Architectural Monographs
Volume VI *Number 1*

**THE
BOSTON POST ROAD**

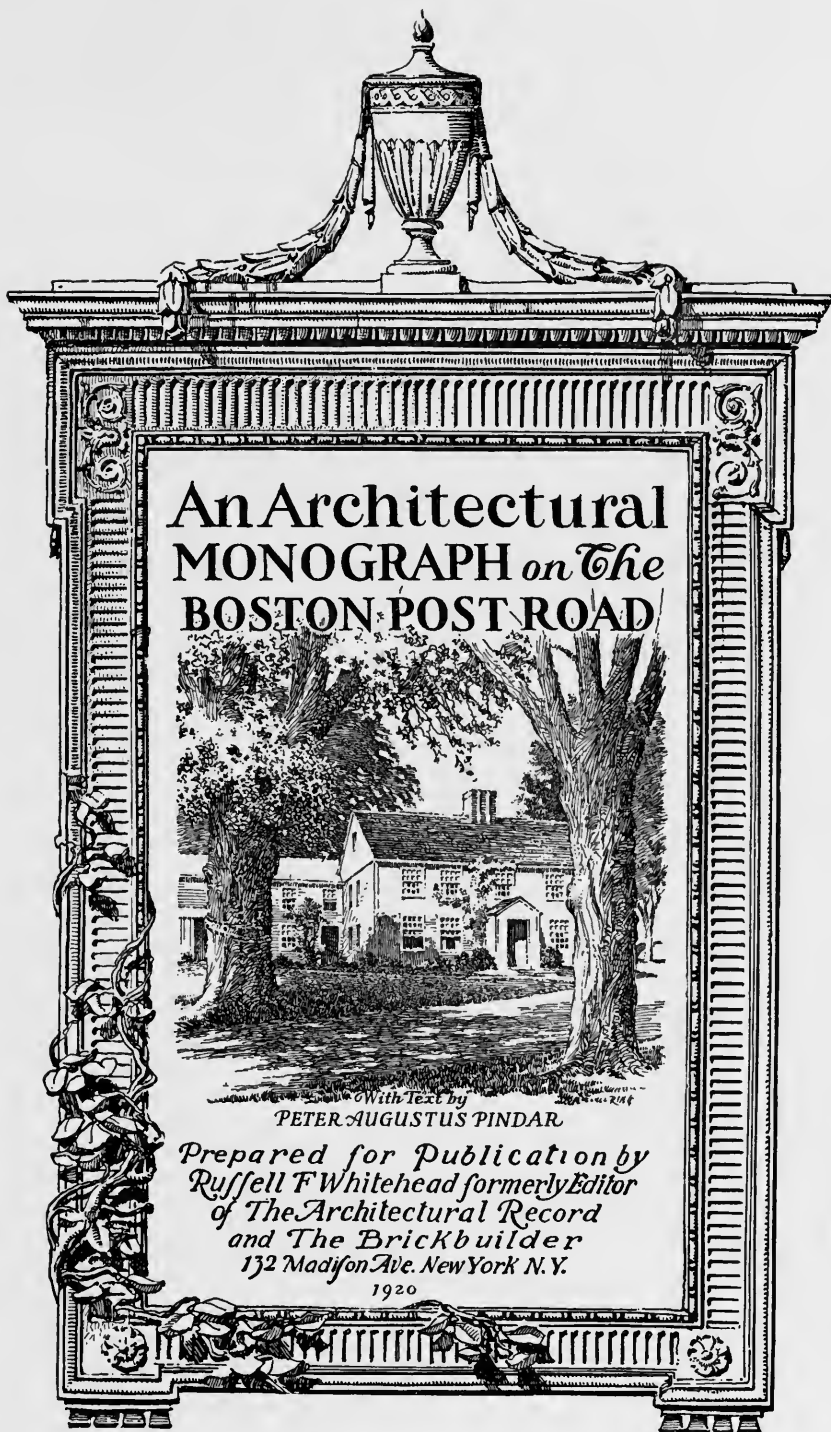
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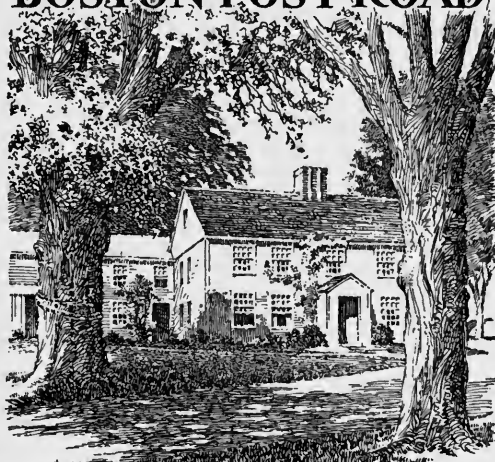
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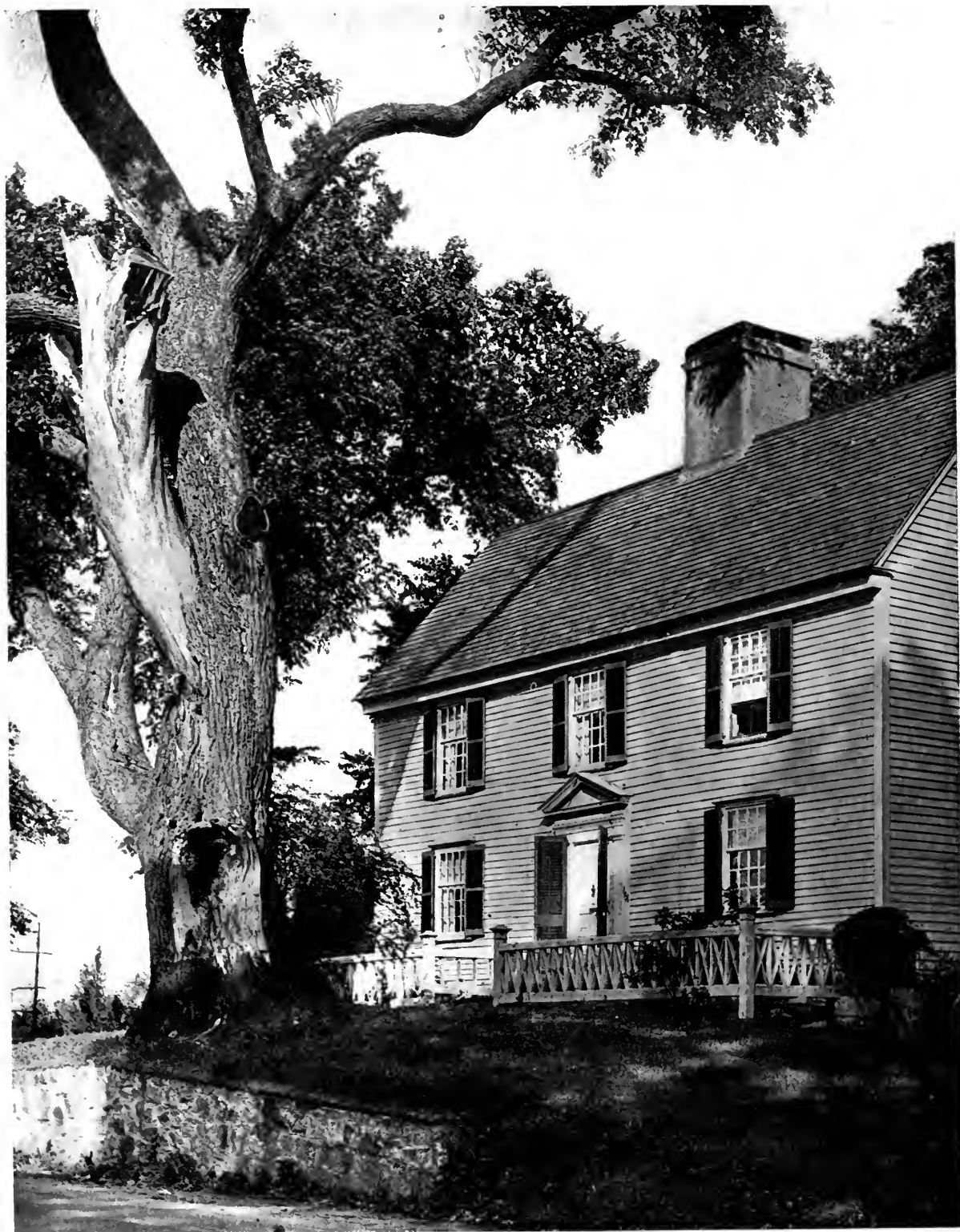
An Architectural
MONOGRAPH *on The*
BOSTON POST ROAD



With Text by
PETER AUGUSTUS PINDAR

Prepared for Publication by
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of *The Architectural Record*
and *The Brickbuilder*
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1920



HOUSE AT GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT.

The WHITE PINE SERIES of ARCHITECTURAL MONOGRAPHS

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION SUGGESTING THE
ARCHITECTURAL USES OF WHITE PINE AND ITS
AVAILABILITY TODAY AS A STRUCTURAL WOOD

VOL. VI

FEBRUARY, 1920

No. 1

THE BOSTON POST ROAD

By PETER AUGUSTUS PINDAR

A well known New England architect, who prefers to have his reputation rest only upon his strictly professional work, uses the above nom de plume.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH CLARK

THE earliest settlement in Connecticut was made not along the shore, but in its center at Hartford. This is rather curious, since the history of all colonization has been that settlements in new countries have been made first at the ports, and have then expanded up the navigable rivers. One would have expected, then, that the first settlements in Connecticut would have been made in some of its many excellent harbors, at New London perhaps, or New Haven or Bridgeport, and that colonization would have spread first up the Naugatuck, the Connecticut and Thames Rivers, and along the shore of the Sound.

But the settlement was made by men from Massachusetts who advanced overland, and, finding fertile bottom land and a smiling soft countryside along the Connecticut River, founded a little group of colonies around Hartford and Wethersfield. The Connecticut shore was colonized not long after, and as trade developed each little coastal town became the metropolis of the farming community in the neighboring back country.

As means of transportation improved, various cities attained positions of dominance, and instead of a dozen or so small metropolises on the northern coast of the United States, Boston and New York became of great importance, while the other cities dropped into subordinate positions, and either grew very slowly, as was the case with New Haven and New London for many years, or actually receded in population, as, for example, Stonington and Essex. These smaller towns became little more than halting places on the famous old Boston Post Road from New York to Boston, but their inhabitants

had already laid the solid foundations of small fortunes, and settling down to a quiet, unhurried life, built for themselves in the closing years of the eighteenth century groups of homes which were in their day of an average quality and cost as high as in any other part of the colonies. Further, since most of the towns have grown hardly at all, and are for the most part beyond the zone of commutation travel to New York or Boston, the houses which served the people a hundred and thirty or forty years ago, have been adequate for their descendants. Where in the big and prosperous cities the proportion of old houses is almost negligible, and the absolute number very few, in the small old towns one could almost fancy one was miraculously returned to the Colonial period, so many old wood-built houses remain.

The settlement was of course by English people, and because the character of the country has changed so little, the names of the towns themselves are a pleasure to hear, recalling visions of old times. The terminology is singularly free from "made-up" names which sound like the titles of a train of Pullman cars; they are all simple English town names, used in tender recollection of the birthplaces of their founders, with one or two reminiscences of Indian nomenclature; and to call them over is to bring to mind the pleasant land of Kent and Sussex and Surrey from which their early settlers came: Westport, Bridgeport, Fairfield, New Haven, Branford, Guilford, Clinton, Saybrook, Lyme and New London—old towns for us, older towns in England.

They are singularly alike even to-day, and must once have been so closely similar that the

Colonial traveller who took the Boston stage-coach from New York to his home town must have been uncertain as to when he arrived, unless he had ticked off the places as he passed. They were as alike as beads on the string of the Boston Post Road,—beads of the same pattern and the same color. Each little town centered around the "green," usually a rectangle nearly square, but sometimes an irregular central space between converging roads, perhaps a long narrow rectangle, or a triangle. Each green was dominated by the church, and the churches, even, were so alike that they offered no convenient means of identification: they were, in fact, often copied directly from others in neighboring towns, as when the trustees of Lyme contracted to have built "a fair copy" of the North Church in New Haven. The stores were hardly distinguishable from the houses, and indeed most shops were only parts of houses devoted to selling things; show windows were uncommon, and those which existed were divided into small panes because it was not yet known how to make large sheets of glass.

The houses, too, were very much alike, simple square boxes, usually two stories in height, with fairly low pitched gable roofs. Occasionally one-story houses with rather steeper roofs were built, and sometimes gambrel roofs were employed on both one and two story houses. The plans showed little variety, being almost always contained in a nearly square rectangle, so that the mass was a simple block, sometimes relieved by low wings, although these were usually later additions. Even piazzas or covered porches did not form part of the original design, so that these old houses depended for their beauty upon two things only: the proportion of a very simple

mass, and the excellence of the sparingly employed detail in cornices, doorways and windows. Pilasters or engaged columns were sometimes used to decorate the principal façades, and sometimes there was a change of material in the first story from that in the balance of the house, but usually the wall surfaces were of clapboards spaced with apparent regularity.

With such simple motives, it is astonishing that the designers could obtain any variety in appearance, and that they were able to make the houses so uniformly lovely. Most modern architects would be put to it were they compelled to work within such narrow limits and with so few opportunities to introduce new motives; yet the old carpenter-architects appeared to be able to produce endless variations of a very simple theme, each worthy of study. Apparently their greatest question was as to whether the front or the gable end should be placed to the street; when the gable end was the main façade they often ornamented

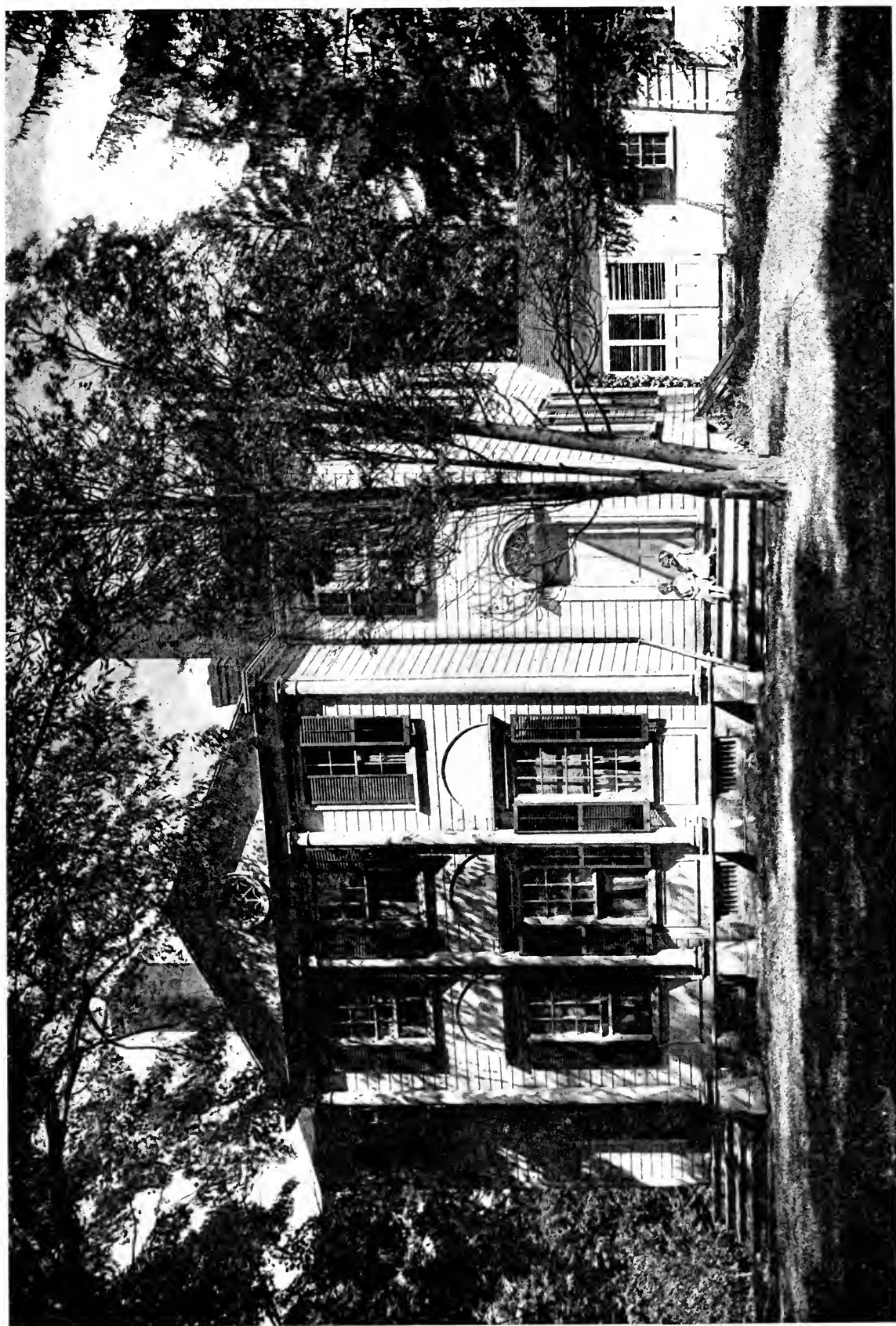


Detail.

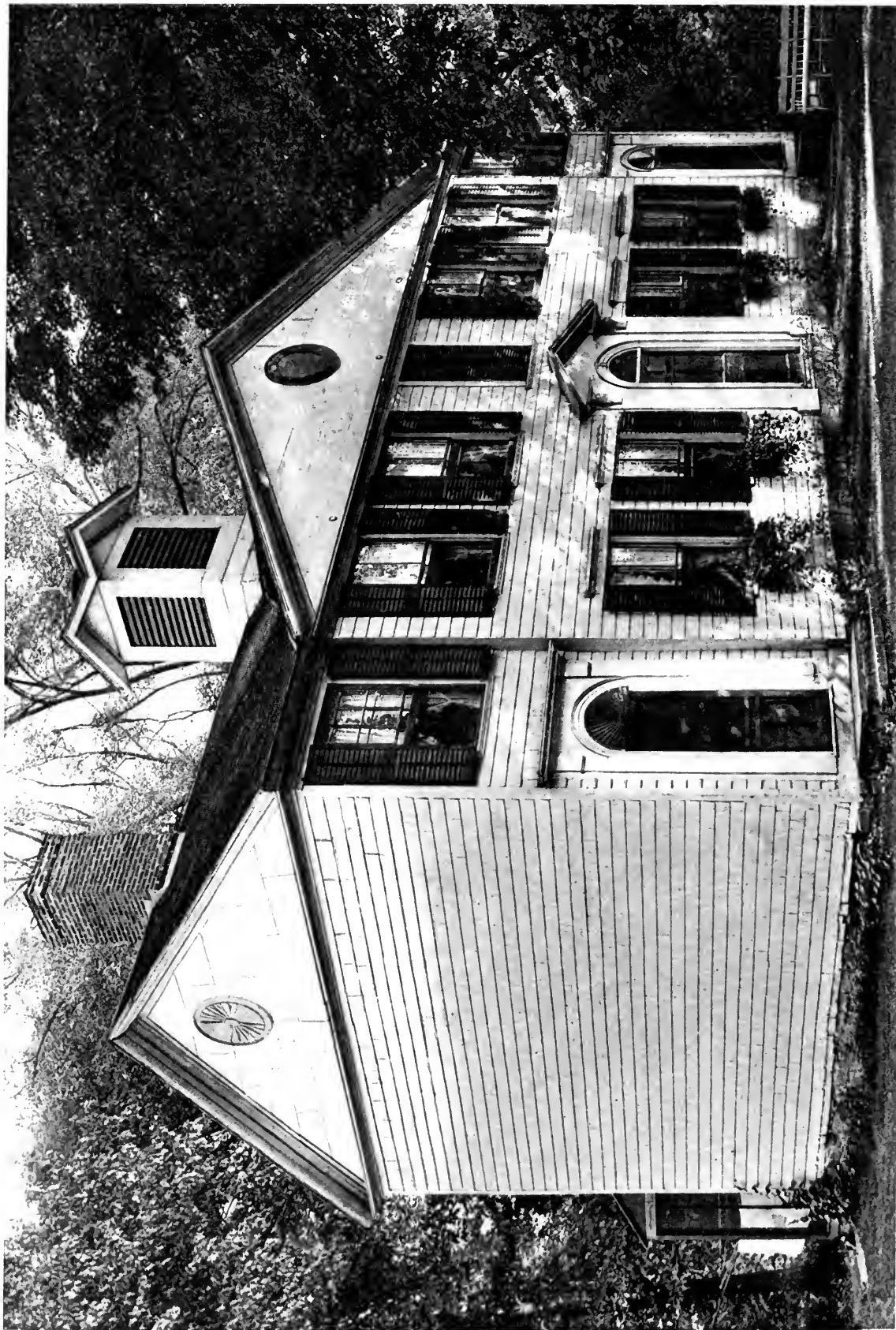
THE JESSUP HOUSE, WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT.

it to a degree with them unusual.

Once in a while we find a house which has a plan different from the standard one to a marked degree, and in these the designers evidently felt very strongly the need for symmetry. Take, for example, the Jessup house at Westport; this house has a gable in the center flanked by short wings with hip roofs. Curiously enough neither of the two doorways is in the gable end but they flank it in the wings; and they are by no means as much ornamented as is customary in doorways of this period, but are rather suppressed to accentuate the importance of the central gable end. The extreme slenderness of the engaged columns expresses their purely decorative purpose, and the arches over the windows and the panels below them illustrate very well the way in which



THE JESSUP HOUSE, WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT.



THE OLD ACADEMY, FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT.

the later Colonial designers used plain surfaces of flush boards as a decoration.

One of the most interesting of the buildings along the Post Road is the old Academy, now used as a tea-room, in Fairfield. It was built, as its name indicates, for a boys' school; and its designer evidently felt that its semi-public purpose should be expressed on its façade. This he did by introducing a pediment over the five center bays, and projecting the wall below five or six inches from the main wall. The cupola or

which, at least in their central features, have changed little in the last hundred years. We can still form an excellent idea of how Branford, Guilford, Clinton, Saybrook, Lyme and Mystic appeared from the top of the mail stage; or, indeed, from any one of the towns we could know how the others must have looked. Most of them still have at least one old church with four tall columns down the front and an excellent classic tower over the main entrance; the old greens are well kept and filled with old elms, and sur-



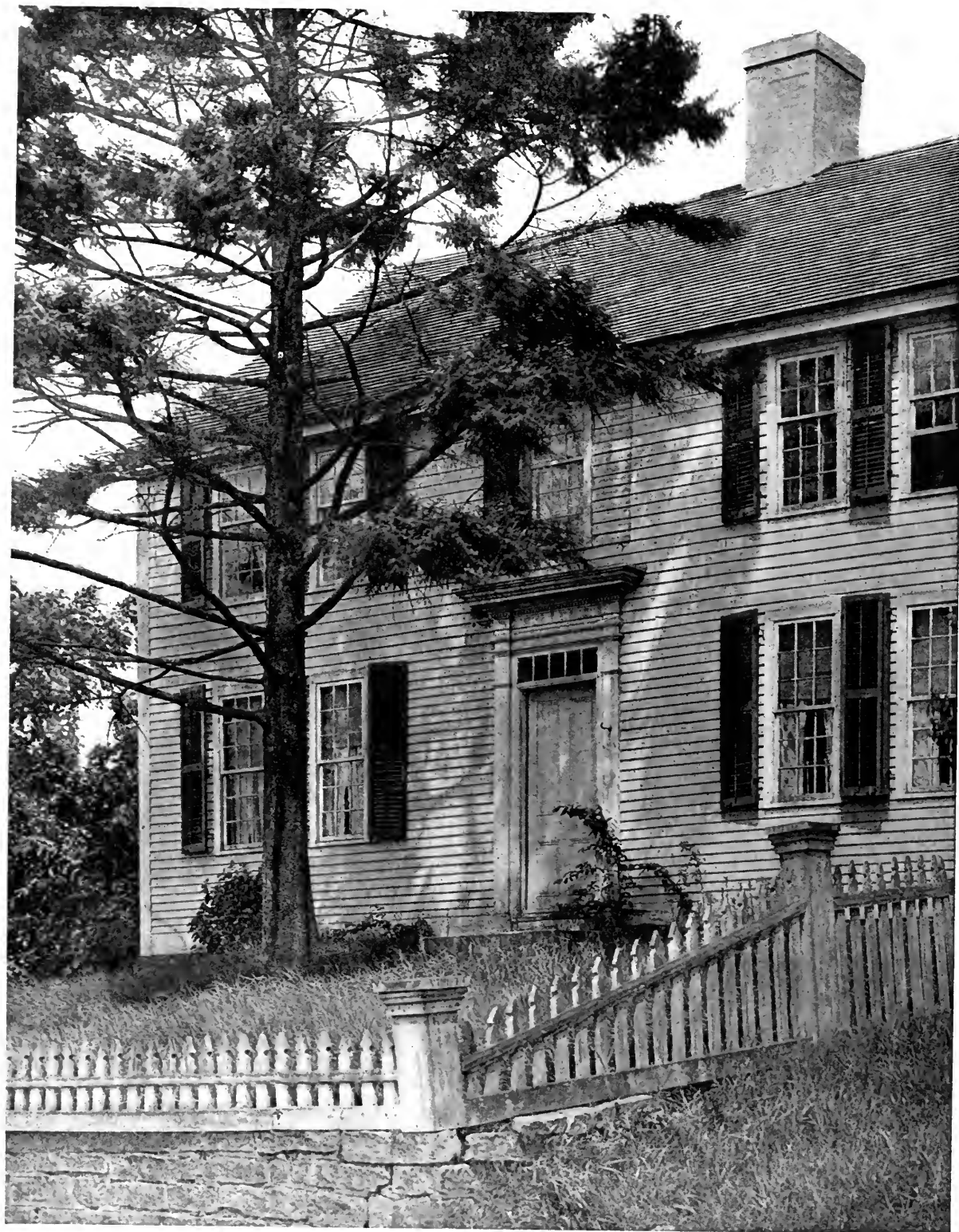
HOUSE AT GROTON CENTER, CONNECTICUT.

lantern is in its present state new, but replaces a former one. The charm of the building is largely in the plain end walls and the flush boards used in the gables and pediment; the detail is not very interesting, but the three doorways, the pediment and the cupola make a quaintly dignified little public building.

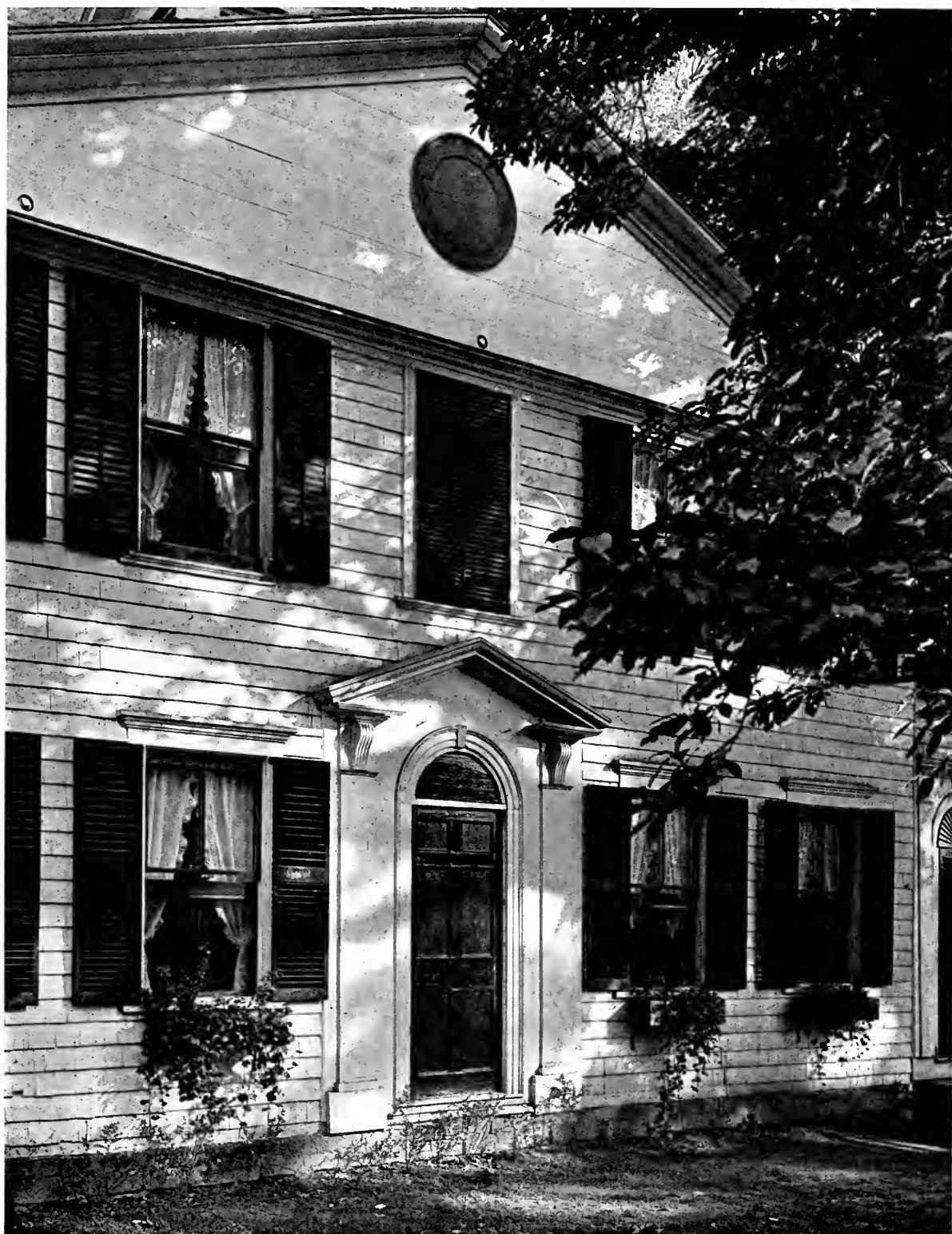
New Haven has grown to be a pretty big city itself, but still retains some relics of the time when it was still a toy Colonial city. The old churches still dominate the green, and around it are two or three of the old houses, of type similar to those in the little towns along the Post Road. Going east from New Haven along the road all the way to New London, we pass through an unbroken succession of little towns

rounded by square white houses appearing to regard the green, over the white picket fences which surround them, with an air demurely discreet. Of these houses the several varieties are illustrated: the beautifully placed square old house at Guilford, with its tiny dooryard, shows in its roof of unequal pitches a reminiscence of the seventeenth-century work; the house on the Post Road near Saybrook is as nearly typical of the locality and the period as it is possible to imagine; one of the "early settlers" survives in Groton Center, bearing a tablet which states that "Whitefield the Evangelist preached from a platform erected level with the upper windows of this house, June, 1764." Curious inscription!

(Text continued on page 12)



HOUSE AT OLD MYSTIC, CONNECTICUT.



THE OLD ACADEMY, FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT.



HOUSE NEAR WESTBROOK, CONNECTICUT.



HOUSE AT GROTON CENTER, CONNECTICUT.



THE STAUNTON HOUSE, CLINTON, CONNECTICUT.



HOUSE AT OLD LYME, CONNECTICUT.



Doorway.
HOUSE AT GROTON CENTER,
CONNECTICUT.

It interests us because of its very humanity, the quality it has of small town gossip. Very likely, not one out of fifty who reads it with edification has the remotest idea of who was "Whitefield the Evangelist," or even a very clear idea as to what an evangelist is or was. The inscription fails to inform us where the platform was erected. Was it against this house, or across the road, or in some neighboring State? And why should this house have been used as a standard of measurement? Yet it is a curiously satisfactory inscription, and one leaves with real pleasure at knowing that the platform was so high, and hopes that the preacher didn't fall off.

Some of the houses are of the humbler sort—farmers' or fishermen's cottages; but all alike are pervaded by the same peaceful spirit which holds the whole countryside in a sort of spell. It must be a very happy life to be a fisherman in the town with the most enthralling name in America,—Mystic; though Qu'appelle in Quebec Province also has its claim. Mystic has not grown at all, but sits on its Mystic River, dreaming of the days when its whale-ships brought back souvenirs from Tahiti and the Marquesas. New London, on the other hand, has grown great,

or at least greater than it was, and is fortunate in having one of the few public buildings of Colonial days extant,—the county court house,—from which we gain a very clear conception of what was our ancestors' idea of grandeur. We have advanced beyond them in the understanding of what size is, and what art is, but we can still learn from the quiet dignity of this beautiful old building the value of pure design.

Our ancestors' conception of what was requisite to elevate a building to the dignity of a court house differed from ours, less in the choice of motives than in their size. Pilasters to-day are the things we most commonly use to impress upon the beholder the fact that the building they adorn is one of importance, but where we would indicate the size of the rooms by running the pilasters the full height of the building, the older designers prefer to superimpose their orders. There are few or no elements we can select from the design of this building which identify it as a public building rather than a residence, and yet its motives subtly express its purpose. The material of which it is composed, the scale of the detail, the general mass and even the lantern are not in any sense distinct from the same motives in private-house work; the pathetic attempts



Doorway.
HOUSE AT OLD LYME, CONNECTICUT.

to produce a sense of solidity by the introduction of quoins on the first story and heavy key blocks over the windows are not distinguishing features of this building, or even of other old public buildings.

The same characteristics mark most of the early American public buildings, as for example the New York City Hall and Independence Hall in Philadelphia; the purpose was rarely expressed by magnifying the size of motives, but rather by their multiplication, and it would seem with real benefit to the dignity and quality of their work. A large row of columns is unquestionably an impressive feature, but there seems to be a limit to the size to which they can profitably be used; to increase them beyond this limit is rather an evidence of paucity of imagination than of a lofty conception. It will be remembered that Guy Lowell won the competition for the New York County Court House with a design which was least in scale of all those submitted, and the enormous columns which were the dominating feature of many of the designs submitted became ludicrous when the true scale of the exterior was indicated by Mr. Lowell's drawings. It must also be remembered that there is no problem in classic architecture more difficult than to super-



Doorway.

HOUSE AT OLD MYSTIC, CONNECTICUT.

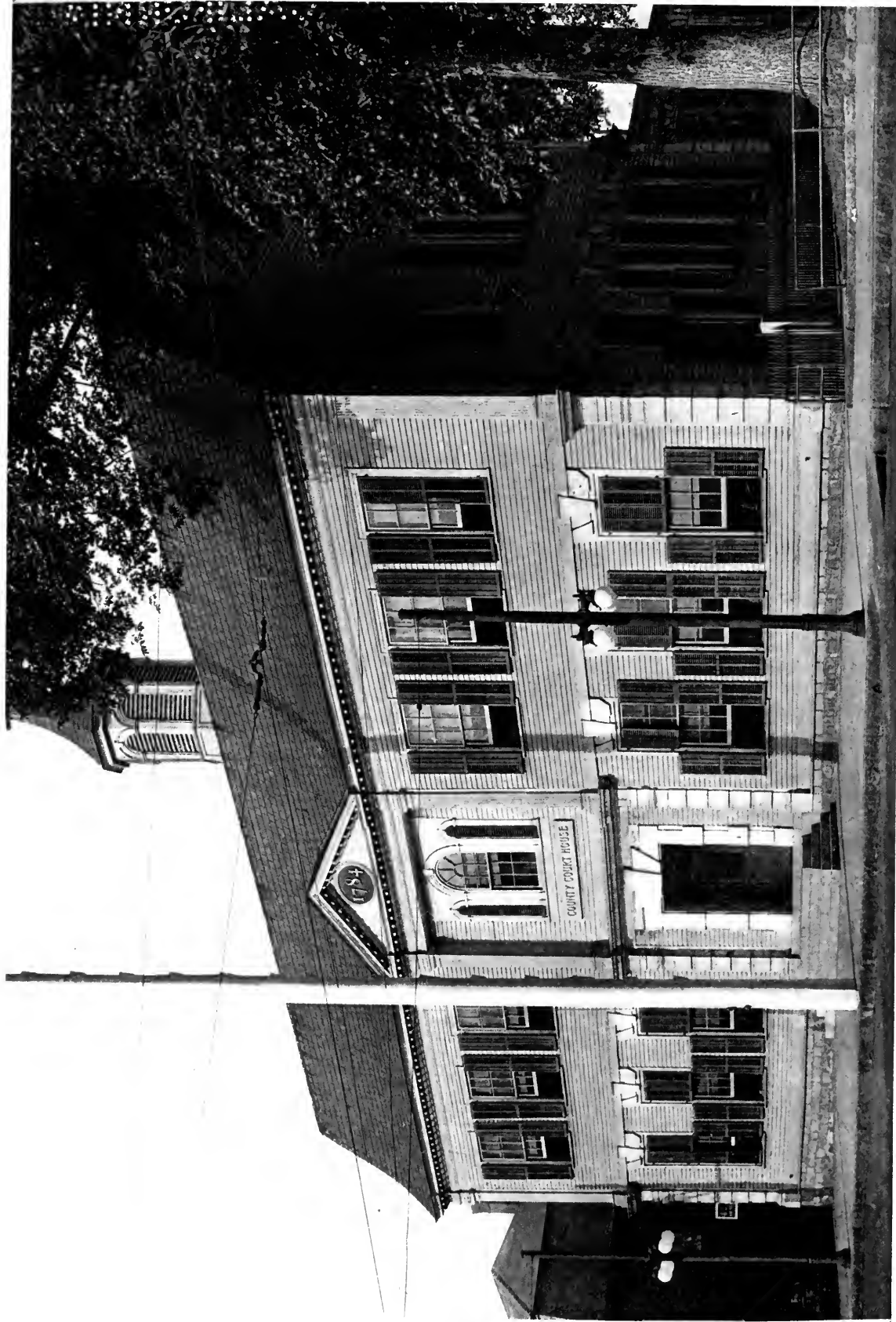


Doorway.

HOUSE NEAR SAYBROOK, CONNECTICUT.

impose orders, especially more than two in number, yet it is a problem which the early architects solved in general much better than we. The greatest difficulty is probably to combine the cornice of the building with the entablature of the uppermost order; certain of our architects have even tried to decorate skyscrapers from top to bottom with applied orders of two or three stories each; it is obvious that it is impossible to reconcile the scale of the cornice of a thirty-foot order with that of a three-hundred-foot building. In this little court house at New London, the two-story building is perfectly terminated with a cornice of excellent scale as regards the order of which it is an integral part.

It is impossible to say just why we are so rarely able to approximate the quality of Colonial work. Certainly we are better educated in architecture,—or should we say *more* educated? We have a wider field of precedent from which to draw and we have more money and better mechanics with the same quality white pine as a building material, yet the Colonial architect showed within his limited field a more daring talent for design, and a greater perfection in execution.



THE COUNTY COURT HOUSE, NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT.

FIFTH ANNUAL ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION

PROGRAMME FOR A ROADSIDE TAVERN

OUTSIDE FINISH TO BE OF WHITE PINE

PRIZES AND MENTIONS

Design placed first will receive	-	-	\$750.00
Design placed second will receive	-	-	\$400.00
Design placed third will receive	-	-	\$250.00
Design placed fourth will receive	-	-	\$100.00

SIX MENTIONS

JURY OF AWARD

Cass Gilbert	-	-	-	New York
Chas. Z. Klauder	-	-	-	Philadelphia
Howard Shaw	-	-	-	Chicago
R. Clipston Sturgis	-	-	-	Boston
F. R. Walker	-	-	-	Cleveland

Architects and Architectural Draughtsmen are cordially invited to compete

Competition closes at 5 p.m., Monday, May 3, 1920

Judgment, May 14 and 15, 1920

IT has long been a matter of regret that the standard, not so much of food and service, but of the general appearance of the roadside hostleries in the rural districts of the United States is so universally discouraging, while in England every wayside tavern offers at least cheerful and agreeable surroundings to its patrons. In many cases a ramshackle, unkempt-looking building houses an excellent cuisine, but unless its reputation for good food is known, the casual passer-by will not be tempted to try its hospitality.

Of late, owing to the increase in motor traffic, and the correspondingly large demand for attractive accommodations and adequate service, a great many small hostleries, situated often in pleasant and secluded spots, have been established. Although some of these places, especially in the neighborhood of the larger cities, have an unenviable notoriety, there are very many others which meet pleasantly and without ostentation a very real necessity. These latter establishments—call them taverns, coffee houses, restaurants, or what you will—have been for the most part housed in old buildings, with the slightest possible alterations to make them in any sense adequate. The proportion which have been intelligently constructed to suit their purpose are small. However, those in which care has been expended to make them artistically agreeable have attracted sufficient patronage to prove that the expenditure has been justified. Of course, good food and good service will eventually attract a regular clientele, but the casual passer-by will instinctively assume that the tavern with an inviting and tasteful exterior will be managed by people who know how to care properly for the traveller.

Therefore, for the subject of this competition, we have selected a small roadside tavern, capable of providing satisfactory, though simple, entertainment, and not necessarily situated in or even near a city.

PROBLEM: The design of a roadside tavern, to be built of White Pine, which is for all year round use, and which is to include a restaurant, and living quarters for the people who run it. The requirements are as follows: A dining room, area 750 square feet, and of such shape that the removal of tables would permit it to be used for dancing.

Men's dining room, area 200 square feet.

Private dining room, area 175 square feet.

Private dining room, area 100 square feet.

Reception room, area 250 square feet.

Adequate lavatories and toilet rooms for both men and women.

Kitchen and service portion, area 500 square feet.

Chauffeurs' dining room, area 150 square feet.

Living room for proprietor's family, area 300 square feet.

Two main bedrooms, area 225 square feet each, and one bath.

Four servants' bedrooms, area 80 square feet each, and one bath.

A space for the sale of candies and soft drinks, area 125 square feet, with direct access from the highway. These rooms may be disposed in one, two or three stories, as the competitor may elect.

Floor heights should not be less than 8 feet nor exceed 12 feet.

Cellar will be required for heating purposes only, and need not be indicated on drawings.

No piazzas other than an entrance porch are required.

The problem shall include a lay-out of the plot indicated herewith, showing development of the property as a whole.

The competitor shall design an appropriate hanging sign for the entrance, which, drawn at a scale of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to the foot, shall be his *nom de plume* or device. The architectural style is optional.

IT IS REQUIRED TO SHOW: A pen-and-ink perspective of the subject, projected from a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch scale plan, clearly indicating the character of the exterior finish. Plans of each floor at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch scale, blacked in solid, with the dimensions of each room given in good-sized figures. Two elevations at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch scale. A cross section at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch scale. A plot plan at $\frac{1}{32}$ inch scale, showing what is in the contestant's mind as the desirable development of the entire property. Detail drawings at $\frac{1}{2}$ inch scale of some interesting feature of the exterior, and of the main dining room. Profiles of the exterior details at 3 inches to the foot, in sufficient number to present the subject adequately and attractively.

Graphic scales must be shown in all cases.

JUDGMENT: The Jury of Award will consider the architectural merit of the design and the ingenuity shown in the development of the plans; the fitness of the design to express a wood-built building; the appropriateness of the design to the given site.

Excellence of rendering of the perspective, while desirable, will not have undue weight with the Jury, in comparison with their estimate of the contestant's ability if otherwise shown.

The Jury positively will not consider designs which do not conform in all respects to the conditions of the Competition.

PRESENTATION: Drawings are to be shown on two sheets only. Each sheet is to be exactly $26 \times 34\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Plain border lines are to be drawn so that the space inside them will be exactly $25 \times 33\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Whatman or similar white paper is to be used. Bristol board or thin paper is prohibited, and no drawings are to be presented mounted. All drawings must be made in BLACK ink. *Diluted black ink is particularly prohibited.* Color or wash on the drawings will not be permitted. All detail drawings are to be shown on one sheet. It is especially required that the perspective be accurately plotted. There is to be printed on the

drawings as space may permit: "DESIGN FOR A WHITE PINE ROADSIDE TAVERN." The drawings are to be signed by a *nom de plume* or device.

DELIVERY OF DRAWINGS: The drawings are to be rolled in a strong tube, not less than 3 inches in diameter, or enclosed between stiff corrugated boards, and sent to RUSSELL F. WHITEHEAD, EDITOR, 132 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y., to reach him on or before Monday, May 3, 1920. Drawings delivered to Post Offices or Express Companies in time to reach their destination and to be delivered within the hour set for final receipt will be accepted if delayed by no fault of the competitor. Enclosed with the drawings is to be a sealed envelope, bearing on the outside the chosen *nom de plume*, and on the inside the true name and address of the contestant. Drawings sent by mail must be at the first-class postage rate as required by the Postal Regulations.

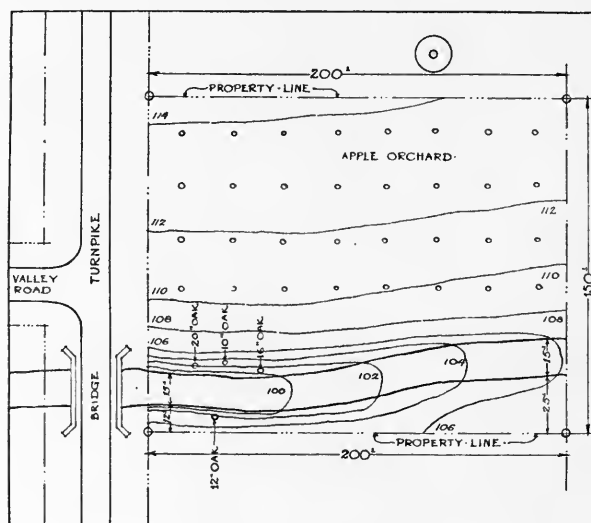
Drawings submitted in this Competition are at owner's risk from the time they are sent until returned, although reasonable care will be exercised in their handling and keeping.

THE PRIZE DESIGNS are to become the property of *The White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs*, and the right is reserved by this publication to publish or exhibit any or all of the other drawings.

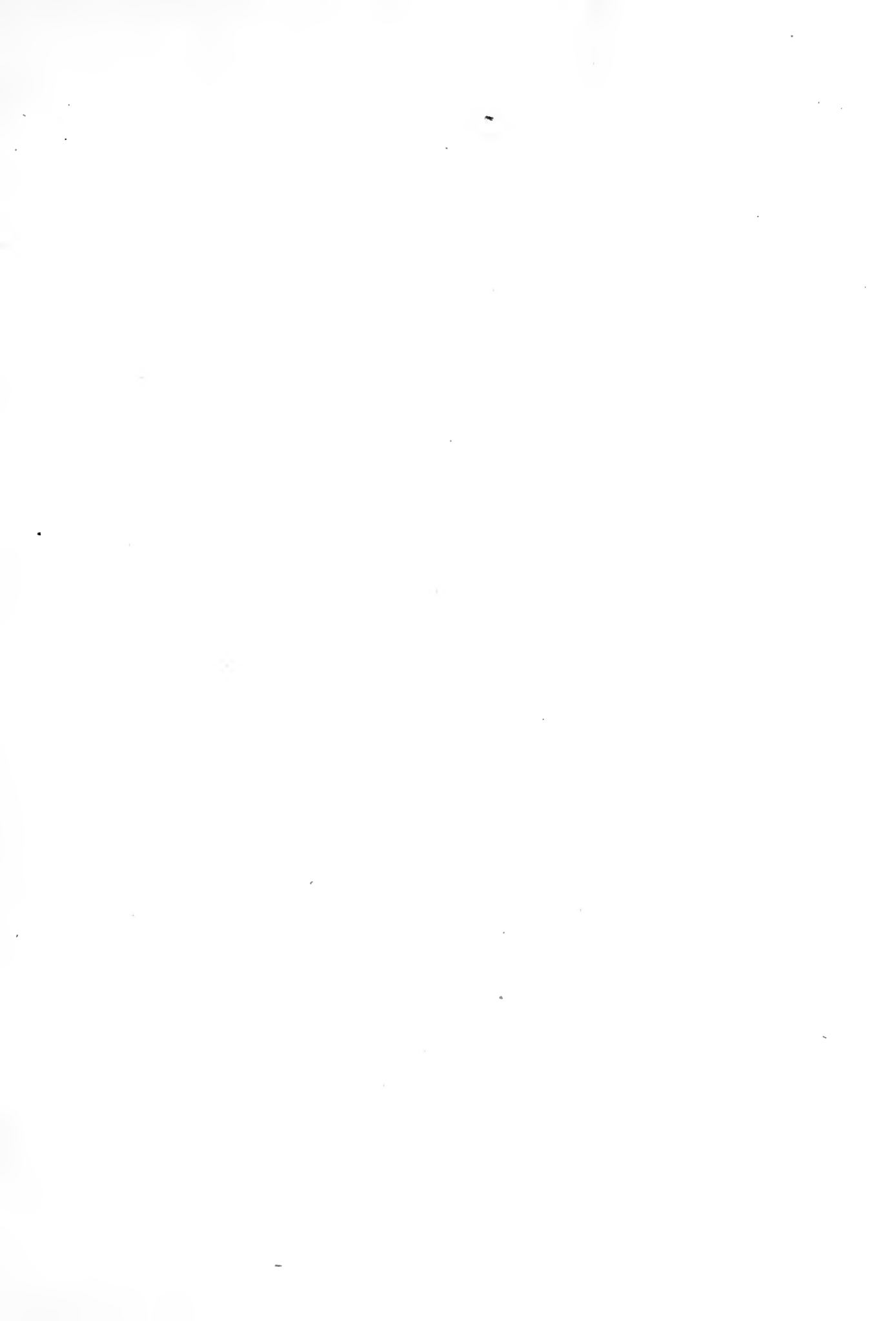
PUBLICATION OF DESIGNS: The Prize and Mention drawings will be published in the August, 1920, number of the Monograph Series; a copy of this issue will be sent to each competitor.

Where drawings are published or exhibited, the contestant's full name and address will be given and all inquiries regarding his work will be forwarded to him.

RETURN OF DRAWINGS: The authors of non-premiated designs will have their drawings returned, postage prepaid, direct from the Editor's office.



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